



HAVA NEWS

A special informational bulletin for Michigan election officials on the implementation of the Help America Vote Act of 2002

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To ensure the successful implementation of the statewide, uniform optical scan voting system, it will be necessary for all county and local clerks to objectively review the available optical scan voting systems and cooperatively decide on the system that will work best for their county. This issue of HAVA NEWS provides a suggested list of “evaluation points” that should be considered when assessing voting equipment performance.

Jurisdictions that schedule voting equipment demonstrations are reminded that they should postpone making any decisions, expressing any preferences or entering into any commitments with the vendors until the ITB process has been completed. After the ITB process has been completed and the “qualified vendors” have been identified, all counties will be asked to finalize their voting equipment selection.

This issue of HAVA NEWS also explores the factors that punch card, mechanical lever machine and paper ballot jurisdictions should consider when making a decision on whether to replace their voting equipment for the 2004 election cycle or wait until the 2006 election cycle to upgrade their voting equipment.

Evaluation Points: Precinct Based Optical Scan Tabulators

Past performance and reputation of vendors: Network with other clerks within the state who have previously worked with the vendor. Ask for input regarding their experiences both good and bad.

Tabulator programming costs: Request information from the vendor on the cost of programming their tabulators for use in state and local elections. Ask for the criteria used to determine pricing (examples: size and complexity of ballot, price per election, price per tabulator, etc.). Ask for information on any price increases that can be anticipated over the next several election cycles and the related reasons.

Tabulator programming options: Ask for information on who can program the tabulators and what kind of training is involved.

Ballot printing costs: Request information from the vendor on the cost of printing ballots for state and local elections. Ask for the criteria used to determine pricing (examples: total number of ballots purchased per county, total number of ballots purchased per jurisdiction, size and complexity of the ballot, etc.). Ask for information on any price increases that can be anticipated over the next several election cycles and the related reasons.

Ballot layout capacity: Ask how many vote positions are available on the ballot and the ballot sizes that are available. Ask if both vertical and horizontal ballot layout options are possible.

Ballot printing options: Ask for a complete list of the printers authorized to produce ballots for the system. Ask for details on the process used by the vendor to authorize local printers to produce ballots for the system.

Post-warranty coverage and costs: Request annual pricing information for post-warranty maintenance programs (preventative maintenance and repairs).

Election day support: Ask about election day trouble call response times, on-site repair service, and if replacement tabulators are provided if the tabulator cannot be repaired in the field.

Miscellaneous supplies: Ask about replacement costs for tabulator memory units, printer ribbons, tapes, toner or cartridges, paper rolls, secrecy sleeves, ballot marking tools, state approved tabulator memory unit transfer containers (not plastic anti-static bags).

Voter interaction: Ask how the tabulator handles rejected ballots; how error messages are displayed; and how the override functions work. Also ask about ballot secrecy and the design of the secrecy sleeve.

Equipment storage, transport and set-up: Ask about the weight of the tabulator and ballot container. Review the steps for setting-up or assembling the tabulator and ballot container prior to the opening of the polls. Ask for information on the steps that must be carried out by the election inspectors before the polls open and after the polls close.

Election day trouble-shooting: Ask for information on the types of maintenance issues that can be addressed on election day. Request information on the error messages and instructions displayed by the tabulator when malfunctions occur.

Evaluation Points: Election Management Systems (EMS)

Three-component system: Ask for a complete demonstration of all three components (a) ballot layout or definition (b) tabulator programming and (c) vote accumulation and reporting.

Past performance and reputation of vendors: Network with other clerks within the state that have previously worked with the vendor. Ask for input regarding their experiences both good and bad.

Post-warranty coverage costs and/or license fees: Request price information for annual maintenance and/or license fees. Ask for the criteria used to set the fees. Ask for information on any price increases that can be anticipated over the next several election cycles and the related reasons.

User friendliness: Explore how easy the EMS software is to use.

Report options: Ask for examples of vote accumulation/election result reports. Ask for a complete listing of the report options.

Transmission of precinct results: Ask for a demonstration of the steps involved in forwarding precinct results to the city, township, county or other locations or web sites.

Punch Card, Mechanical Lever and Paper Ballot Jurisdictions: Factors to Consider Before Purchasing an Optical Scan Voting System

The following lists a number of areas that typically require close attention when migrating from a punch card voting system, mechanical lever machines or paper ballots to an optical scan voting system. As you would expect, migrating to a new voting system which employs voting and tabulation technology unfamiliar to your voters and election workers greatly increases the amount of planning needed to ensure the successful implementation of the system.

Accuracy testing: While the accuracy testing procedures mandated for optical scan systems are the same as those used to test the accuracy of punch card voting systems, the amount of labor involved in testing optical scan systems exceeds the amount of labor involved in testing punch card voting systems as each optical scan tabulator must be *individually tested*.

Vendor support services: Arrangements must be made with the system vendor to ensure that adequate technical support is provided during election periods to ensure the proper operation of the equipment. Such support is especially critical during the initial system implementation phase.

New forms required: As the forms associated with the use and administration of optical scan voting systems differ from the forms used with punch card voting systems, mechanical lever machines and paper ballots, entirely new forms must be developed and stocked as a part of the migration process.

Ballot production: New arrangements must be made to procure the ballots needed to administer upcoming elections. As optical scan ballots must be printed to exacting specifications, the ballot printer must have the capabilities to meet the specified printing standards.

Election inspector training: All election inspectors must be thoroughly instructed on the impact the new voting system will have on their duties and functions.

Unique administrative issues: Each voting system has its own unique set of administrative issues which must be addressed to ensure the trouble-free operation of the system. The most effective way to deal with the issues is to anticipate them prior to the initial use of the voting system; addressing issues as they emerge during the course of an election invites public discontent and negative media coverage. Unique administrative considerations associated with optical scan voting systems include ballot secrecy when the ballot is printed on both sides; ballot storage and transportation arrangements due to the increased weight and size of the ballots; the handling of write-in votes given the tabulator's inability to distinguish write-ins that create an "overvote" from write-ins that do not create an "overvote"; and the actions that the election inspectors can and cannot take when a voter is experiencing problems with the deposit of his or her ballot in the tabulator.

Public education and media coordination: A comprehensive public education program is needed to introduce the voters to the new voting system. Similarly, a program to inform area media outlets on the new system is also necessary. Such programs, when properly designed and implemented, are extremely helpful in minimizing public resistance to the change, media misconceptions over the operation of the new system and confusion in the polls on election day.